



# *LINCOLN CHAFEE*

## *U.S. SENATOR*

### *RHODE ISLAND*

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## **SENATOR CHAFEE MEETS WITH AMBASSADOR FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

*Trade, Haiti, and Rhode Island Dominicans Top the Agenda*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Last week, **U.S. Senator Lincoln Chafee** held a meeting with **Ambassador Flavio Dario Espinal** of the Dominican Republic. The two met in Chafee's Washington Office and discussed various issues, including trade and the recently approved Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), concerns about Haiti, and the flourishing population of Dominicans in Rhode Island.

"It was great to meet with Ambassador Espinal and discuss the very important issues which affect both the United States and the Dominican Republic. The partnership between our two countries is essential to maintain stability in the Western Hemisphere, both for economic as well as for security reasons," Senator Chafee said.



Senator Chafee is pictured with Ambassador Flavio Dario Espinal of the Dominican Republic. For a high resolution of this picture, please call 202-224-4913

"We must work together to combat the issues facing the Hemisphere and the world, such as halting the trafficking of drugs from South America, improving trade and the global economy, and allowing for Dominicans to have a greater voice in our democratic government," he continued.

With a population of approximately 27,000, Rhode Island is host to one of the largest concentrations of Dominicans in the nation. Senator Chafee and Ambassador Espinal spoke about Rhode Island's growing Dominican population, and discussed the importance of working with Rhode Island's three Dominican-American legislators to

address the needs of the larger community. In February, Chafee met and spoke with many Dominicans from across the state at the Dominican Republic Independence Day commemoration at the Rhode Island State House. The event was hosted by state Senator Juan Pichardo and state Representative Grace Diaz.

“Rhode Island's Dominican community is vibrant and influential both culturally and politically, with a population of more than 20,000 strong and growing,” Senator Chafee said.

Also discussed were the problems facing Haiti, its collapsed economy, deteriorating security infrastructure, and environmental failures. Ambassador Espinal stressed the need for not only humanitarian aid but also for an improved security structure.

Espinal also pointed out that the lack of an effective security infrastructure has made Haiti an international hub for trafficking drugs into the United States. Countries such as Columbia have been given permission to fly in Venezuela’s airspace in order to traffic drugs into Haiti, where they are smuggled into the Dominican Republic, for import to the United States. Chafee and Espinal agreed that the two nations must come together to combat this problem in an expeditious fashion.

Finally, the two discussed trade and CAFTA-DR, which will boost opportunities for Rhode Island’s exporters throughout the Dominican Republic, providing an expanded market for the state’s products. In 2004 alone, the Dominican Republic received exports from Rhode Island totaling \$25 million and was the state’s 12<sup>th</sup> largest market. The Ambassador thanked Senator Chafee for his support of CAFTA-DR and the two discussed how this trade agreement will drastically increase Rhode Island’s export market, benefiting both countries.

“Altogether, it was a very productive meeting,” Chafee concluded. “We have opened an important dialogue which will ultimately benefit both countries in many important ways.”

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